



*Drawing by Sandy Simonson*

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So give me my flesh  
For just a little while  
And I will remember a lifetime.  
And there is Air, Land and Sea  
Fish, Flesh, Fowl  
And my flesh is meat  
of the Universe.  
I live a lifetime!

**Freewheelin' Frank Reynolds**



When Uncle Billy Graves realized he was dying on Christmas Eve of 1846 on what is now known as Donner Summit, he asked his two daughters to eat his body in order to gain the strength to get through to Sutter's Fort.

Fortunately for the Graves girls a younger more delectable man died soon after and it was him they ate for strength, thus saving themselves from familial cannibalism.

The young children of Jacob Donner were not so fortunate. When finally reached by their rescuers they, "were sitting on a log with their faces stained with blood, devouring the half-roasted liver and heart of their father, unconscious of the approach of the men, of whom they took not the slightest notice even after they came up."

Of course, none of the poor wretches of the Donner party were at that point in their perilous Western crossing nearly so palatable as, let's say, a quickly killed fast-frozen Brazilian soccer player. But there was meat enough, albeit lean, to ensure the survival of the less squeamish. Strangely, it was the two Indians in the party and a strong man named Edy who refused to sustain themselves with this kind of meat.

What thoughts went through the heads of the participants in this strange sacrament that stands at the threshold of the settlement of the West? What visions of future meals appeared as the blizzard broke after Christmas and stars shone through the deep cold up there 7,000 feet above the land they would someday call home?

## II

**Oh we'll make soup for Uncle Sam's injuns  
It's beef, heap beef, I hear them cry.  
Git along, git along, git along little dogies,  
You'll be big steers by and by.**

### **Cowboy Song**

In the fertile valleys west of the Sierras towards which the Donner party was heading, there was meat in abundance: elk, black-tailed deer, antelope, rabbit, and grizzly bear. Vast herds of roving semi-feral cattle, spawn of 16th century conquistador oxen and mission kine, shared the rich perennial grasses. Indian vaqueros loosely worked these herds using the techniques and tools that the American cowboy would turn into a tradition.

After 1822, the rancheros, originally gifts of the Spanish king to conquistadores who didn't want to go back home, proliferated in number as land grants became available from the new

Spanish-American overlords to anyone who could claim Mexican citizenship and Catholicism. A number of fast Yankees were included, as well as a few Englishmen and Scots, hereafter always on hand in the Western cattle business.

The destruction of the climax perennial bunch grass (the situation of maximal balance in the central and coastal valleys of California) probably took place later when herds decimated during the Mexican-American War were replaced by those of American settlers. So efficiently was the land overgrazed that it took careful research in the 1920's-30's to determine that the then dominant annual grasses were not the original climax and had come from European seeds.

In Old California, the vaqueros busted their asses only once a year during rodeo time and it was more of a celebration. After the calves had been branded and the various herds from rancheros left to drift together again, hundreds of thousands of pounds of meat were left rotting on the grass. The cattle culled from the herds were basically slaughtered for hides which were sold to Yankee skippers plying the coast. The stench over the grasslands must have been heavy a few days after rodeos were done.

Like the Great Plains decades later when the buffalo were done in. Some say there were 75 million of them. It took just ten years of producing robes for Eastern and European markets to finish them off.

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When Meriwether Lewis first saw the Missouri River valley, he called it "one common and boundless pasture." Like the California valleys, it was prolific with game and before the advent of farms and ranches a home to dozens of semi-nomadic tribes whose cultures were a brief flash on that sea of grass made possible by European-derived horses. Who knows what relationship between buffalo and humans would have worked out after the coming of the horse had it been allowed to go several centuries rather than one?

When enormous herds of buffalo roamed the prairies of eastern Kansas and Nebraska, the tall grasses were heavily trampled and eaten. The land was burned repeatedly, as well, by the Indians as a means of clearing dead grass in spring. Lewis reports seeing the smoke of such fires incessantly on his way up the Missouri. Short buffalo and grama grasses flourished under these conditions, tall-grass species waned. As the buffalo and the Indians were forced further westward or killed off by the US



Army and the settlers, tall grasses came back. The pioneers thought bluestems followed in the wake of settlement. This misunderstanding (like the one about "rain following the plow") reveals some of the dangerous wishful thinking at the heart of the settlement of the West.

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When the conquistadores and the padres first brought horses, cattle and domestic sheep up through the Southwest, the desert Indians must have been delighted. What cumbersome and succulent morsels they must have seemed to people bred on corn, jackrabbits and a few mountain deer. The Apaches developed a taste for mule.

Strong medicine; a new god and these meaty creatures. Before long, constant harassment by the Apaches, Comanches, and the Navajo and the changable luck padres had with the Pueblo, Zuni and Pima sent the Spaniards back south leaving a legacy of hatred for whites and a whole bunch of feral horses, cows and sheep.

These "wild" cows dispersed through a good deal of the Southwest and especially Texas to become the source of breeding stock for the American range industry. It must have been almost sport for the Texans, hunting the brakes and thickets of the coastal grasslands near the Gulf of Mexico, when they got wind of a big market for cattle back East.

When the Civil War ended there were a lot of Southerners out of luck. "Gone to Texas" was the announcement of a future cowboy or cattle baron. They rounded up roaming herds and headed them north on increasingly well-traveled trails, like the Chisolm, to new rail-head towns in Kansas.

The Indians and the buffalo were obviously in the way. If the refrigerator car had been perfected a little earlier or some sharp-sighted entrepreneur had come along, the buffalo might have been saved. But given the new people's distaste for anything they couldn't bend entirely to their will, it's doubtful.

That both buffalo and Indians were removed is history. Was it a consciously drawn plan? There is an interpretation of events which has the original open-range cattlemen and the free-roving tribes as allies together against settlers with fences. Probably it's cattle nonsense, a specialty with those land barons who held the grass for decades with little or no right to it.

Plan or not, the Indians and buffalo were effectively removed by 1884 and cattlemen were kings. Once proud and free tribespeople waited, wrapped in blankets which kept out the cold but not the blows of memory, for their

sporadic beef rations, usually in the form of a few scraggly cows. An old cowboy metaphor has a sad, beaten man looking like "ration day at the Rosebud."

Lewis' "pasture" had indeed become that, especially when settlers began stringing wire against the cattlemen and vice-versa and both against the sheepmen. **The great Western plains became mere pasturage.**

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### III

Buffalo certainly had an effect on the grasslands, but their widely nomadic ways ultimately kept them at peace with the entire range. When the quick premier stage of the cattle industry passed, during which 6 million cattle were driven to railhead in ten years (1865-75), the long seige of settled ranches began. Homesteaders and ranchers both employed fences. Confinement of stock became more and more the rule and a major reason for wars between cattle and sheep men. By 1890, even sheepmen had settled into fenced ranches and pasturage. The damage to the grass would be overwhelming.

Trouble really began during the hard winters of 1885-86. Until that time there was an incredible boom in the beef industry. Cattle were selling for high prices back East and there was plenty of free grass on public range. An enormous flow of capital came in from the eastern US and Europe, encouraged by flamboyant beef propaganda such as James Brisbin's book, **The Beef Bonanza; or How to Get Rich on the Plains.** Huge ranches run by corporations or individuals from the East, England and Scotland grabbed up literally millions of grassland acres and adopted a series of informal regulations proclaiming range privileges or possessory rights — the latter meaning that control of government land came with the rights of occupancy. The Swan Land and Cattle Company alone controlled over 3 million acres of range. And it was ultimately directed from Edinburgh and Dundee.

In some cases giant spreads were put together by American cattlemen, but the end result was the same; lawless control over millions of Western acres and perfectly callous use of the grass for quick fortunes.

Then the shit hit the fan. The winter of 1885-86 was so mean as to drive hordes of tough settlers back East and wipe out great chunks of the cattlemen's herds. The next summer saw a drought on the northern plains that struck an



already overgrazed range. The next winter was just as bad and there were two more years of dry weather to boot. It caused a great retrenchment in the cattle industry and only a few smart, cautious ranchers who were catching on to the true conditions managed to hold on.

The grass was devastated. Homesteaders had helped by stripping off stretches of sod to plant wheat or corn. Cattle work slower than forms of agriculture that remove the surface of grass in one stroke, but the net effect is similar. The first dustbowl made ranchers tough.

**It also destroyed more than half the carrying capacity of the western range.**

A US Forest Service study in the early 1930's revealed 589 million of these 728 million acres were suffering from serious erosion. After only 60 years of cattle and sheep dominance.

Contemplate how up to 75 million buffalo could use the same range without damage for centuries that an average of only 20 million cattle and 25 million sheep — a total of no more than half the animal units buffalo numbers would have totaled (an animal unit is basically a 1,000 pound herbivore) — had half-destroyed in only 60 years. It's an eye-opener.

The Forest Service study was completed before the full effects of the 30's drought could be calculated. It took the dustbowl to make state and federal governments aware that something had to be done; the Soil Conservation Service and federal grazing districts now regulate 142 million acres of public grasslands. Previous to this, lack of regulation or ludicrously drawn land distribution measures virtually assured misuse of public land as well as the plowing under of private acres, by the millions, that might better have been left for stock. Vast areas are still depleted from the 30's drought of almost all vegetational capacity. And still, with less than half the original carrying capacity, animal numbers only declined 10% during the 30's and began to rise again at the start of World War II. Public lands in Nevada are now carrying at least 37% too many animals according to a recent Bureau of Land Management study. Soil conservation estimates indicate that efforts to combat erosion had by the late 1960's been successful in restoring only 20% of damaged land to average productivity nationwide.

#### IV

The best land is often treated well, but hilly land, the uplands, incredibly misused. Result:

reduction of productivity and erosion which sends silt pouring into riverbeds to destroy the well-cared-for bottomlands. It is a process repeated time and again in the history of civilization. Iraq stands as maybe the best example.

The Tigris and Euphrates river valleys have borne dozens of civilizations. Hordes swept over fertile bottomlands to brush them away and new ones would always re-appear. Until steady vicious overgrazing on the hills, combined with deforestation, removed nearly all the vegetation. Then delicate upland soils flowed into the rivers. Today the land supports a fourth of what it did long before crop-multiplying tricks of modern agriculture.

The same process repeats itself everywhere in the western US. Bad logging practices combined with overgrazing are rendering river valleys incapable of supporting both distant cities and their own populations.

Soon they will be marginal lands.

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There are stretches where the romance of the West almost seems to work. Vast expanses of green rolling land, fir- or pine-strewn draws and north slopes, dotted with white-faced steers is an image of the essential West, a healthy antidote to the cramped industrial East.

Tough and careful ranchers who out-last bad seasons, mean storms and droughts have been mostly responsible for a relatively stable land-use pattern and the approximation of a culture.

Waves of quick-take enterprises have been foisted on the land since cattle and sheep ranchers dug in, but most of them lasted only a few decades before the natural resource they were exploiting (or the easily reached part of it) was gone. Ghost-town mining camps of the last century have their counterpart in abandoned mills and houses of the 1950's logging boom. The gold is gone, the trees are gone. The people are gone and with them whatever fortunes or pains the land dealt them. The remnants of their brief glory, the schools, houses, dance halls and whorehouses are bleeding back into the earth at rates determined by the rain and wind. Miners, loggers, trappers, buffalo-robe hunters have all come and gone leaving incredible scars on the land.

Even farming enterprises associated with stability and slow steady profits have failed throughout the West due to misunderstanding of climactic conditions or distance from mar-



kets. Thousands of homesteaders on the Great Plains found it impossible to last out dust storms wrought on sodless fields. Larger farms went the same way because they couldn't compete with like attempts closer to railheads or cities.

Wheat farmers on the northern range during the 30's who displaced ranchers because of temporarily greater profit margins per acre were blown away during the first years of the drought. Their dust-strewn gullied fields were bought back from the banks by fore-runners of the Soil Conservation Service for an average dollar per acre. The government then dammed the gullies with horse-drawn drags and turned the land back over to collectives of hard-nosed local ranchers who had been easy enough on their grass or sufficiently business-wise to survive.

Ranching has continued to survive and descendants of original ranching families still hold the land in many places through durability, craft and willingness to sacrifice for relatively small profits. The skill and knowledge necessary to deal with apparently whimsical natural forces and the arbitrariness of markets beyond the ranchers' control must be coupled with bone-hard patience and continual effort.

Because of this the Western lands, the great reaches far from cities — three-quarters of the land in 17 western states — is still in ranches or government land leased for grazing. The rural communities, schools, economies and cultures are still in the hands of cattle and sheep people.

But today there are forces capable of finally altering that dominion. They seem to depend on flaws in the ranching economy and way of life which may be endemic. In the long run, large herds of cattle and sheep may not belong on the grass.

Even the most careful use of range for stock is going to have to alter its inclination. Stoddard and Smith's **Range Management** (1943), probably still the most authoritative book in its field states, "**It is impossible to obtain the best use of a range without some disturbance, and the average rancher cannot have normal vegetation as his goal.**"

Sheep ranchers are frankly advised by Weaver and Clements in their 1929 book, **Plant Ecology**, to slightly overgraze as this will result in a mixed grass and weed stage of development bringing a larger variety of palatable plants than the climax stage.

What this means is that large herds of grazing animals flourish on retardation of plant succession. It's a kind of war against the land, less overt than logging or single crop agricul-

ture but in essence the same thing. Stable climax grass or forest systems must be broken or retarded and kept in an immature state to produce large steady quantities of crops. An extreme example is in cereal production where succession is set back to a primary stage by growing huge stands of single, annual grains.

Grazing (especially on enclosed pasture) does the same thing eventually. F. Fraser Darling sums up the case against pastoral grazing, "...just as cultivation of food plants involves setting back ecological succession to a primary stage, pastoralism deflects succession to the xeric, a profound and dangerous change." Bedrock!

Climax plants, the most productive ones, are eaten first. As they disappear, plants lower on the successional scale increase through lack of competition. Grazing animals turn to these. Better plants become fewer and poorer plants increase.

New species invade. Annuals and then woody perennials of low value for stock move in. Finally climax plants completely disappear. Invaders are grazed to death next and land becomes barren. The remaining soil regresses quickly when stripped of protection from wind and rain.

If the process is stopped in time, a secondary succession begins. If the climax soil formation has not been washed or blown away, vegetation moves rapidly back to climax. In soils reduced to lower stages in their own succession, return to climax may take hundreds of years. Invader plants sometimes establish themselves so thoroughly that climax plants cannot take hold again.

Destruction of climaxes, invasion, secondary successions and barren regressive soil formations have gone so far on American agricultural lands that **282 million acres were ruined for agriculture and 775 million damaged as of 1957. Out of 1,903 million non-urban total!**

On the Western range, which contains the bulk of US public land, the process has been faster largely because much of this land is steep; soils are unstable and drought common.

No study has yet substantiated how many of the 1,500 species of American grasses have become extinct since 1865. Grass formations on millions of acres have been altered beyond return. Some of this is attributable to sod-busting, but the bulk of the damage has come through slow stripping away of plant cover by cattle and sheep.

Fifty per cent of private grasslands in 17 Western states are in poor condition, only 5% are still excellent (1957 Conservation Needs



Inventory): ". . . tons of topsoil are being eroded . . . to pollute streams . . . Conservative estimates indicate that half the sediment being carried into major streams of the Southwest comes from land where grazing has upset the delicate balance between plant cover and the soil mantle." Silt for grass, the Tigris-Euphrates exchange — only faster.

**The Western landscape we see is not what was here a hundred years ago.** Dominant grasses have nearly vanished and been replaced by increased stands of sagebrush, rabbitbrush, pinion, juniper, lupine, thistles, poverty grass, buffalo grass, wire grass, prickly pear — plants of low forage level. Every Western region has been damaged and altered.

Old-timers recall with a gleam in their eye species of rich grass they haven't seen in decades. Stories of grass shoulder-high to a horse in places where three inches is a good stand on a hillside today.

The same old-timers seldom connect their grazing practices (and those of their fathers and grandfathers) with the disappearance of good clovers, wild oats and crested wheatgrass. Pastures of pure thistle on sheep range continue to be blamed on thistles rather than on running too much stock. Severe loss of lambs on ranges where the remnant grasses are too meager to give the ewes strength is a result of misusing the grasslands.

But losing lambs is interpreted as a coyote problem.

## V

On a Utah range heavy with both sheep and coyotes, the dietary pattern revealed by stomach contents of 8,263 coyotes was 32% rabbits, 26% carrion, 17.5% rodents, 13% sheep and goat, 3.5% deer and 1% calf and pig. Coyotes track on rabbits and rodents more readily than sheep.

There are as many as five times more jack-rabbits and grasshoppers on heavily grazed land than on moderately grazed land. Ninety ground squirrels an acre have been counted on Utah range, a rate which would establish an acre and a half of ground squirrels eating as much forage as one sheep. A Southwest study concludes, ". . . **under conditions of overgrazing and misapplied control of predators there is almost sure to be a predator and rodent problem.**"

The coyotes are coming back. They follow increases in jackrabbits and rodents caused by

overgrazing. This doesn't imply that coyotes don't eat sheep. Surely they do, and sometimes they kill them (for sport or out of anger?) and leave the carcasses. Coyotes have become visible enough to draw upon themselves a concentrated program of systematic poisoning and trapping that puts a real dent in the whole spectrum of predator and scavenger populations.

The ferocity of ranchers' attacks on them seems to be an evasion of the real facts of overgrazing. If the nature of the ranching setup—costs, taxes, and increasing land prices—is making profitable ranching without overgrazing impossible, it might make more sense to poison the tax-collector, reduce stock numbers, and thank the coyote for showing the real conditions of the land.

Facts in hand show that coyotes make quick adjustments to adversity, often becoming full-scale predators when presented with poison-baited carcasses to scavenge. They have bigger litters when their fellows are being killed off. They are even being seen in places where no record reports them before — Maine and New York State. Will coyotes be spotted in Flushing or Long Island City?

The ranchers are firmly convinced that coyotes are simply and cleanly after their sheep, that they have come back out of no other reason than taste for easily available lamb.

The coyote, in fact, seems to be an agency of the planet trying to set the balance right.

To accuse a native creature which Indians found both entertaining and sacred of being a descendant of Spanish dogs come up through Mexico is to ignore the real damage wrought by the actual hordes of European livestock on North American hillsides.

If the "Spanish dog" theory is not the final indignity, the claim that they are endangering the deer population is. How, when wolves and grizzly, puma and coyote together in years past simply trimmed the herds, could the coyote now threaten them with extermination?

Arbitrary and vicious destruction of a range of predators from eagles to skunks indicates an urge to dominate at any cost. Coyotes are actually cleaning up the damaged grasslands of rabbits and rodents which will damage them even more. There are already too many corpses of slaughtered aboriginal people and incredibly various creatures the planet produced here to sustain its abundance, over millenia not simply generations. The complete subjugation of land, grass, creatures and people to an overblown taste for red meat is at the heart of the "coyote problem."



## VI

As the Western World circles its approach to the bone, luxuries born of a sense of limitless progress fall by the wayside. Jobs, speed and a chance for personal immortality are no longer written into the deed. Neither is 116 pounds of beef a year nor 10.6 ounces of meat a day.

1972 in the United States may have seen the all-time high for per capita meat consumption in the history of civilization. It's declining already — from 188 pounds in 1972 to 175 pounds per person in 1973. The industry is battling the inevitable. There are more cattle on the range and in feedlots than ever before. One hundred thirty-three million as of January 1975. (Sheep numbers are already declining, on the other hand.) Beef prices are coming up in 1975, but great gains aren't in the cards. The 1973-74 energy showdown knocked a hole in the sacred cow. Feed costs are up 65% from 1973. Fertilizer for pasture and hayfields is up 100%. Fuel for machinery and trucks is 43% higher. Machines themselves cost 31% more. High meat prices will leave consumers less able to indulge their taste for red meat. Drooping demands will force lower prices to ranchers while more efficient processing machine investments will cut both ways.

Hard voices are being leveled at the consumption of meat itself. Awesome discrepancies in diet between rich and poor nations seem to be aggravated by the meat-eating habit. Francis Moore Lappe points out how American eating habits are actually creating scarcities, while the US government maintains a pose of Friend To The Needy World. If it was ever true, it is no longer today. US exports for aid are a bare sixth of what they were ten years ago, and all but 20% of this goes to political allies or potential friends — Chile, Jordan, and formerly Viet Nam. We only send food abroad to meet "effective demand," that is to those who can afford to pay.

Our diet and increasingly mechanized mono-agricultural methods place enormous strain on the earth's resources.

The worst of the excesses deal with meat. Half of American agricultural products go to feed animals; 40 million tons of grain, five million tons of soybeans, huge quantities of fish-meal and even dairy products were fed to US cattle in 1974. Household pets consume as much food energy as 47 million people require. We actually import more protein from underdeveloped countries than we send out — mostly for stock. Half the record fish-catch of 1970-71 went to feed meat animals in the US and other

affluent nations. One-third of the annual African peanut crop feeds European animals. Americans feed as much grain to their animals as the people of India and China eat in a year.

"Commodities are higher priced and in short supply and any massive increases in food purchases for aid must be viewed against the effects on the American consumer during a period of severe inflation." (A spokesman for the Ford administration.) But economists believe that perhaps \$5 billion of the increased consumer spending on food in 1973 was a result of expanded farm exports. Americans receive \$8.7 billion back for exports of which only \$1.9 billion goes to other-than-farm sources. The consumer segment loses at least \$3 billion. They are paying for higher living standards of allies abroad and subsidies for American farmers, not for people who are hungry. (John Wayne received \$250,000 not to farm his land in 1972.)

The meat industry has reacted by affirming changes in grading standards which will require less feeding, falling back on grazing land or pasture which now makes up 40% of all acreage in the US. It is a picture of meat as the bounty of wild or rural America for which the National Cattlemen's Association will pay \$30-40 million to advertise.

The stock on the range today is only as close to rural America as its dependence on genetically improved breeds, hybrid grasses, herbicides, pesticides, and farm machinery from urban research and manufacturing centers will allow. The harvest from those "millions of otherwise unusable acres" leaves by truck to run a gamut of highways, feedlots, packing houses and meatcutters. It is the largest and most ornate agricultural system humans have ever known, surpassing in both sales and sheer effort per ounce of food any other crop segment of food production. The stockman is either at the top or the bottom of a ladder whose other end is the urban world commodities market investor and the city supermarket.

Cows or sheep might make a run from the Mississippi delta to a feedlot in the Imperial Valley of California (itself recently created from diverted Rocky Mountain water) and from there to a packing plant in Idaho and then on a last 800 mile run back to California. Or from eastern Colorado to Iowa for finishing and then back to Denver for slaughter and finally to Chicago to be eaten. Or bred, raised and fed right in the Iowa corn belt and sent to New York after a mafia agent has greased the palm of a butchers' union executive.

The cow or sheep itself is hundreds of mutations away from whatever it was before people



domesticated it. Genetic manipulations to meet ever-changing market criteria have left the descendants of tough, mossy-horned Texas cattle creatures with neither the stamina nor the natural resiliency to live on the range without continual help.

Both cow and cowboy are moving closer to AI (artificial insemination) where the cowboy impregnates a cow with semen from rigorously selected bulls which was stored in sterile canisters within sterile vaults. Instructions from a recent issue of **California Farmer** give advice for this consummation. "It is very important to bring cattle to the breeding chute in a nice quiet way. An upset cow will not breed. Handle gently. Don't get excited yourself."

The edge of humor in this bizarre relationship between man and cow disappears in a description of a new Eastern "central breaking plant" (slaughterhouse).

"If you ever go to a cookout on the moon, chances are the steaks will come from a facility like [this]. The [packing] companies are ready should bacterial control become the law of the land. Most important is the human element. . . Personal hygiene . . . is like in a hospital. You enter the plant through a special door arrangement (five hatches) like the carcasses. . . Could this plant be a sign of things to come?"

What may be coming is total removal of cattle and sheep from the range. "Confinement rearing" means lambs raised 5,000 at a time in huge sheds a brief walk from the slaughterhouse and the whole operation enclosed in coyote-proof fences. For cattle, it means four-wall dry lots and a diet of reprocessed manure. But the butcher must not be allowed to sneeze!

Too much meat isn't good for you. Especially if you are a human male with a cardiovascular and respiratory system dating from the hardier evolutionary past. If you eat as much meat as your early ancestors without having first helped to track the creature down, kill it with spears and carry it back home for family and friends, it's going to sit heavy. Even heavier after it's been fed Gro-Getter Concentrate and doctored with oxytetracycline, DES or sodium nitrite.

Do daughters of cows fed DES during pregnancy get cancer in the reproductive system or just daughters of women who eat the cows, and what right does someone have to feed you stuff like sodium nitrite which tricks some molecules into looking like others and thus allows a gene mutation which helps preserve meat and may be what cancer actually is?

The Meat Business accelerates inequities in world diet while setting in motion a system of processing and distribution whose expenditures might far exceed the food value returned. All this to enable a select group of the Earth's people to eat twice as much protein as they need in a form that is not only unnecessary but a threat to their health. On "otherwise useless" acres.

## VII

Old ways pass. Some people die. Some still move to Los Angeles. The trucks still roll over the hills, carrying grass-fat cattle and sheep and what forests are left to take. Tourists come back in the summer. Winter follows sure as taxes.

Toward the river mouth, new stretches of gravel and sand lie where last fall there were alder thicket and meadow. Some scars on the hillsides heal. Others keep oozing into the river. Deer abound in the brush where dense forests once limited their feed. Thousands of abandoned logging tracks make it easier for hunters.

Government agents cruise in and out in vehicles three inches shorter than last year, calculating cost-benefit ratios to determine whether saving anything will pay. They bring their own lunch and are gone by nightfall. Owl's hoot mixes with mournful crowsounds at dusk and dawn.

One of the last big stands of old-growth fir is coming down to benefit the Save-the-Redwoods League. Loggers without permits talk war and organize against environmentalists.

Ranchers in clusters share stories and shake heads over coyote kills, EIR reports for Nevada range, taxes, feed, hippies, developers. There's quiet talk of land-prices and about someone whose retired father is all that keeps him from selling the family spread and heading to a place farther from tourists and government cars. No one wants him to go. Folks are thinking.

The Valley is alive. The river sings and swells with life. The land struggles towards health, against odds, always producing marvels. There are other valleys but none more beautiful.

Remember what it used to look like or talk to those who do. Help where the land can't heal itself and figure out how to eat while you're doing it, or figure out a way to eat that doesn't hurt the land. Try not to sell it.

**THERE ARE OTHER VALLEYS BUT  
NONE MORE BEAUTIFUL.**